DEVEL EDUCA

UNICEF

Development Education
Paper No. 23

THE SELF-RELIANT CHILD

Nils Hartmann

OUTLINE FOR A DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION COURSE

The International Year of the Child in many ways influenced education in Danish schools. The topic was taken up in many subjects and at many levels. The activities, which since the IYC have been part of development education in Danish schools, have been various both in form and content, but many topics deal with "Children and Basic Needs", "Children and their Rights - All over the World", and "Children in Developing Countries". An example of an educational course, "The Self-Reliant Child", which has been carried out at several hundred Danish schools follows. This course is spread over three school days, and has been published by the Danish Committee for UNICEF in the educational material "Education for Self-Reliance". (1)

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(1) Is available on request from the Danish Committee for UNICEF. Address: Dansk UNICEF Komite, Billedvej, 8 Frihavnen, DK - 2100 Kobenhaven O.

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OBJECTIVES

To teach "our" children about other children's lives and conditions and at the same time make them aware of their own situation.

To teach the pupils that all children have some basic needs which must be met if they are to live a decent life.

To teach the pupils that the basic needs of all children are not met, and to create a positive attitude among the pupils towards the necessity of some changes in the "rich societies" if the conditions for children in the "poor societies" are to improve.

To teach the children that basic needs also include some "non-material" needs.

STARTING POINT

Start from the pupils' general experience about themselves and other children.

Let teachers as well as children try the challenge which lies both in working together in different age groups and in working together in huge classes of around 75 pupils (same size as in many developing countries).

PRACTICAL THINGS

The preparations must start early, i.e. 2-3 months before the study project is to be carried through.

It is necessary to have days for planning (if necessary a weekend) in which representatives of pupils, parents, teachers, and the school administration participate.

The teachers must in good time inform all pupils at the school about what is going to happen. That could take place in a special lesson dedicated to the social tasks of the form master and her/his class. Posters may be put up at the school for that purpose.

Parents and others must either at a meeting or in writing be informed about how they can be involved and contribute.

FIRST DAY

The pupils are divided into huge classes. Each of these classes has several rooms at its disposal at the school and perhaps also an outdoor area.

The work of the day begins in each class with brainstorming on the subject "What does a child need?".

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All suggestions are written on the blackboard and sorted into material and non-material things.

Then a list of all that is absolutely necessary is made. All unnecessary things are listed separately.

Each class is then divided into small groups which by means of drawings, cut-outs, texts, clippings, etc., illustrate one of the following subjects according to the pupils' choice:

- some material needs
- some non-material needs
- some necessary things

The result of this work forms part of a vast collage, to hang in the great hall of the school or in the gymnasium.

After this each class goes on working with the basic needs. Which needs do children have? Which needs do adults have? What can be done to fulfil the needs of the people?

Investigation also includes books, slides, and films.

2ND DAY-MAKING THINGS THAT CHILDREN NEED

The school is divided into workshops engaged in the following:

- mending of clothes which the pupils do not use anymore. The clothes are washed and ironed so they can be used again. Various organizations ship such clothes to refugee camps in different parts of the world;
- making carpet slippers and the like for the pupils themselves;
- recycling workshop for toys, old bicycles, etc.;
- making notebooks, pads, etc., so the school can save money for other things for the benefit of the pupils;
- improving the playground, making a "frieze" for a large wall so it will be nicer to be at school. Bakery and "green kitchen" where the pupils can buy cheap food;
- making healthy food in the canteen;
- if possible a class farm is made where crops for domestic science can be grown.

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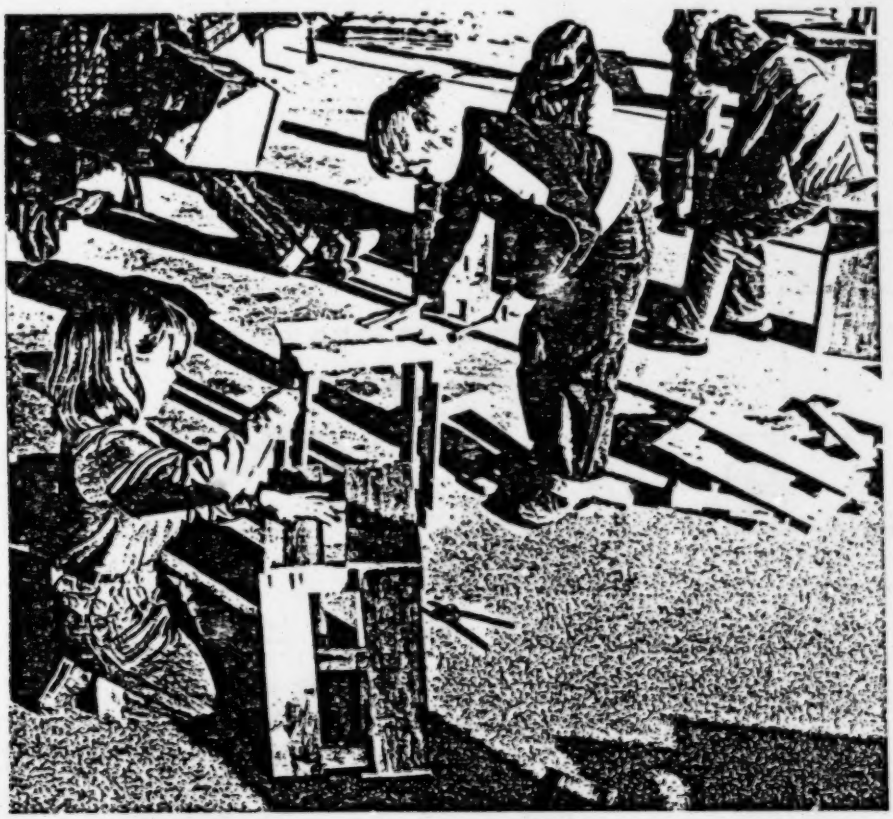
3RD DAY - THE PRACTICAL WORK CONTINUES

A "civic restaurant" is set up with various food groups who bake bread and prepare healthy food. All parents are invited under the motto "Invite your family for dinner and provide food for a family in a developing country". The gymnasium is transformed into a "civic restaurant" with serving of food and pure drinking water at a certain price per portion. The profit goes to UNICEF which will see that the money is used for families whose basic needs for food are not fulfilled.

Note: Although the outline is presented for schools, it is clear that it can be easily adapted for out-of-school programmes.



Self-reliant education in a Danish primary school

(photo by Nils Hartmann)

Starting material for the subject "What does a child need?" on 1st day. Write or draw your suggestions in the four sections at the bottom. Illustrate your own basic needs (material and non-material) in the 8 numbered sections. Draw a picture of a friend in a developing country in the dot-and-dash-lined section. Which needs does this child have? What can be done to fulfil the needs of all children in the world?

1

2

3

4

WHAT DOES A CHILD NEED?

5

6

7

8